

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child and Family Services (CFS) Review is designed to help States improve child welfare services and to enhance the outcomes for families and children who receive those services by identifying strengths and needs within a State program, as well as identifying areas where technical assistance can lead to program improvements.

The State's program is examined from two perspectives: the outcomes of services provided to children and families, and the Systemic Factors that affect the agency's ability to help children and families. The review is in two stages – Statewide assessment and on-site Federal-State review. The Statewide assessment provides an opportunity for the State to conduct a self-assessment by examining programmatic data in light of programmatic goals and outcomes for children and families. The on-site review is conducted in order to get an indepth understanding of how services are delivered. The on-site review includes intensive reviews of a sample of in-home and out-of-home child welfare cases and interviews with State and local stakeholders and service providers.

Arizona completed the Statewide assessment in July 2001. The on-site review, including the reading of 50 sample cases, was conducted the week of September 24, 2001 at 3 sites (Cochise, Maricopa and Yavapai Counties). The period of case record review was April 1, 2000 to the date of the review, September 24, 2001.

The information from both phases of the review was compiled and used to determine the State's degree of conformity with the requirements under review. Arizona was found in substantial conformity in five of the seven systemic areas (Statewide Information System, Case Review System, Service Array, Agency Responsiveness to the Community and Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, and Recruitment and Retention) and two specific Safety Outcomes (S1 and S2). Two systemic areas (Quality Assurance System and Training) and the five specific Permanency and Well-being Outcomes are not in substantial conformity.

For the areas where the State is not in substantial conformity with requirements, the State has the opportunity to implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to correct the areas of nonconformity. The State must submit its PIP to the Federal Regional Office within 90 calendar days from the date the State receives written notice from the Administration for Children and Families that the State is not operating in substantial conformity.

Penalties are suspended while the State implements the approved PIP. The total estimated penalty for the 7 areas of non-conformity is \$885,269.

Introduction

A review of the State of Arizona child and family services programs was completed pursuant to section 1123A of the Social Security Act and 45 CFR 1355.31 through 1355.37. These sections charge the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with the review of such programs. The purpose of the review is to determine the degree of conformity with State plan requirements and other program requirements under Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.

The reviews cover the range of child and family services funded through Titles IV-B and IV-E, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, and family support and preservation services. The process evaluates seven specific Safety, Permanency and Well-being Outcomes of services. In addition to reviewing for Outcomes, the process also examines seven Systemic Factors that affect the State's capacity to deliver services.

The review process features two major phases. The first phase, the Statewide Assessment, consists of the development of a State Profile, derived from data for Federal fiscal year (FFY) 1999 contained in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and for calendar year 1999 from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). This Profile provides information on key indicators relating to safety and permanency for children entering the child welfare system. States develop their Statewide Assessment using this data and other sources of information. The assessment analyzes the process, procedures and policies of the State's child protective services and foster care and adoption programs. This assessment also focuses on the Systemic Factors that are in place that enable the State to carry out the process, procedures and policies of the program.

The second phase, the On-site Review, includes intensive reviews of 50 sample cases and interviews with State and local stakeholders and service providers. Information from both phases of the review is used to determine the State's degree of conformity with the requirements under review.

In reviewing for Outcomes and Systemic Factors, the process is designed to identify both the strengths and areas needing improvement in State programs. For those areas in which the State is determined not to be operating in substantial conformity with review requirements, the State has the opportunity to implement a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to correct the areas of nonconformity. According to 45 CFR 1355.34(b)(3) for the initial State CFS review, each Outcome must be substantially achieved in 90 percent of the cases examined during the On-site Review in order to be determined in substantial conformity. Although the State is advised of applicable penalties associated with the degree of nonconformity, the penalties are not assessed until the State has had an opportunity to correct the areas of nonconformity through the PIP.

The period under review for the Child and Family Service On-site Review in Arizona was from April 1, 2000 to September 24, 2001. The review process consisted of the following activities:

The State completed the Statewide Assessment in July 2001 in consultation with the ACF Regional Office.

The State and the ACF Regional Office selected three locations for the On-site Review: Maricopa (26 cases), Cochise (12 cases) and Yavapai (12 cases) Counties. The On-site Review was conducted during the week of September 24-28, 2001.

A State and Federal review team of 54 persons reviewed a total of 50 sample cases. Review teams at each site consisted of a site leader and co-site leader from Federal staff, a site coordinator from State staff, and 20 two-person State/Federal case review teams. These teams reviewed and rated the services provided children and

families in relationship to safety, permanency and well-being criteria. This was done by reading the case records and interviewing those involved with the case such as parents, caseworkers, foster parents, service providers, and when appropriate, the children themselves.

The teams also conducted interviews and focus groups with approximately 125 State and local stakeholders, including foster parents, managers, caseworkers and supervisors, citizen review boards, judges, and other community partners. The stakeholders' comments are included in the Summary of Findings section of the report. Comments were included only if they represented common themes expressed by a number of stakeholders or frequently repeated by various stakeholder groups. Comments made by single stakeholders and not repeated throughout the interviews were not included in the report since they did not represent a common theme.

The results of the Statewide Assessment, the On-site Case Review and the Stakeholder Interviews were compiled and used to make a determination of the State's degree of conformity with regard to each of the seven Outcomes and each of the seven Systemic Factors.

This report summarizes the information obtained from the review pertaining to each Outcome and Systemic Factor, and the Performance Indicators used to evaluate them. The ACF Regional Office will be working with the Arizona Division of Children, Youth and Families to develop a PIP that addresses those areas not in substantial conformity.

Key Findings for Safety, Permanency and Well-Being Outcomes

In order for a State to be determined to be in substantial conformity with any given Outcome, the Outcome must be substantially achieved in 90% of the cases reviewed in the State's first CFSR. In addition, the State must meet the national standard for the Statewide aggregate data indicators related to that particular Outcome.

Note: The following is a summary of key findings. Detailed information on numbers, percentages, and their analysis are found in the discussion of each Outcome that follows this section.

SAFETY OUTCOMES

1. Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

This Outcome is in substantial conformity.

- 90% of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome 1, which meets the 90% threshold.
- The Statewide data indicator for **repeat maltreatment** is at 4.8% and meets the national standard of 6.1%.
- The Statewide data indicator for **maltreatment of children in foster care** is at .08% and meets the national standard of .57%.

Reports of abuse and neglect during the period of review were generally responded to promptly and investigated timely by staff exhibiting persistent and effective efforts to contact families. Overall, 84% of the cases in which reports were received during the review period were investigated within the required State timeframes.

Case reviews disclosed only 4% of the cases having incidents of maltreatment during the review period, which is less than the Statewide and national percentages.

Stakeholders commented that safety is the first concern for reunification and that workers are prompt in investigating reports referred from the Hotline. Stakeholders have mixed feelings regarding the Hotline. Some state the Hotline has increased consistency across the State, while others feel some discomfort that the Hotline might not be sufficiently responsive or that it may delay reports being received by investigating workers.

2. Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

This Outcome is in substantial conformity.

- 91% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome 2, which exceeds the 90% threshold.

Staff routinely and quickly offer a wide array of services to families even when reports of abuse or neglect are unsubstantiated. Services are usually individualized to meet the children and families' needs. Staff also make timely and appropriate referrals for food, clothing and housing when these needs are identified. There were few instances where services needed were not provided or services provided did not meet the family's needs.

The Family Builders Program has assisted Arizona in providing 100% response to reports of child abuse and neglect and assuring families have the opportunity to receive services that would not have received any attention prior to Family Builders. However, stakeholder interviews noted concern about the Family Builders Program's ability to protect children from abuse or neglect. Community education and awareness should be

provided on the Family Builders' criteria for referral and threshold for removal, and the fact that cases that would not have been previously investigated are now responded to and receive services.

PERMANENCY OUTCOMES

1. Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.

- 74% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 1, which is below the 90% threshold.
- The Statewide indicator for **foster care re-entries** is at 10.7%, which does not meet the national standard of 8.6% or fewer.
- The Statewide indicator for **stability of foster care placements** is at 81.9%, which does not meet the national standard of 86.7% or more.
- The Statewide indicator for **length of time to achieve reunification** is at 68.0 %, which does not meet the national standard of 76.2% or more.
- The Statewide indicator for **length of time to achieve adoption** is at 19.8%, which does not meet the national standard of 32% or more.

2 children (6.5%) of the 31 applicable foster care cases reviewed had multiple entries into foster care during the review period. This is not consistent with the results of analysis of the Data Profile, therefore, it appears that the failure to meet the national standard for foster care re-entries may be due to a problem with data integrity as was identified in the Statewide Assessment.

Stability of foster care placement was noted as an area needing improvement. 9 children (29%) of the 31 foster care cases reviewed experienced multiple placement settings during the period under review that were not directly related to helping achieve the case plan goal. 7 of the 9 had special behavioral or medical needs. All of these children were above 11 years old except for 1, who was 8. The data appear to indicate that the children with more than 2 placements tend to be older and more emotionally and behaviorally disturbed.

The case review noted that 86% of the children who had the permanency goal of reunification were reunified in 12 months or less. The inconsistency between the case review and the data profile (68% within 12 months) may be due to problems with data integrity.

The length of time to achieve adoption was identified as an area needing improvement. There were delays in finalizing adoptions due to disruptions because pre-adoptive families were not adequately prepared to meet a child's special needs. There were delays in scheduling hearings to terminate parental rights with no apparent justifiable reasons. There were delays in completing birth certificates, home studies, criminal record checks, and subsidy paperwork. The delays were attributed to increased workloads, backlogs in adoption cases, lack of effective concurrent planning, and/or lack of attention in effectively addressing behavioral, attachment and bonding issues.

2. The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.

- 81% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome 2, which is below the

90% threshold.

Proximity of foster care placements to the child's family was a substantial and consistent strength. Placement with siblings was also rated “strength.” Additionally, in most cases, the agency provided services that contributed to maintaining the parent-child relationship.

Visits between parents and their children, visits between siblings, and preserving connections were areas needing improvement. There was often a lack of case file documentation as to the reasons for the agency's actions or inaction related to these items.

CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

1. Families Have Enhanced Capacity To Provide For Their Children’s Needs.

This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.

- 70% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 1, which is below the 90% threshold.

There is a comprehensive array of services available to families Statewide. Assessments of family needs were made and services were provided accordingly. However, there was a lack of services related to grief and loss situations and to sexual abuse assessment and treatment.

Families were typically aware of the services available and necessary to lead to the safe return of a child and/or successfully maintaining a child in the home. However, in some cases little evidence was provided to support the active involvement of parents in the development of the case plan. Children, even when old enough, were typically not involved in the development of the case plan.

Timeliness of worker visits with children and the parents were a strength. Children and parents were typically seen within DES’s required timeframes. However, in the largest metropolitan area, when a family received Family Preservation Services, there was often a lag between the time services were terminated and the time the cases were closed. As a result, there were no worker visits during the lag period and there was no DES’s follow-up with the family to insure that family needs had been met before case closure.

2. Children Receive Appropriate Services To Meet Their Educational Needs.

This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.

- 85% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 2, which is below the 90% threshold.

While in some locations within the State there is evidence that caseworkers, foster parents and other interested parties successfully advocated for the educational needs of children, this does not occur consistently throughout the State, as reported by stakeholders. Therefore, the educational needs of some children are not being met.

3. Children Receive Adequate Services To Meet Their Physical and Mental Health Needs.

This Outcome is not in substantial conformity.

- 59.2% of the applicable cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-being Outcome 3, which is below the 90% threshold.

Although some children are receiving adequate physical and mental health services, it is clear that many children were not receiving needed services. In many cases, initial health screenings were not completed according to State policy, families were unable to access needed services and/or follow-up services were not provided.

All sites consistently lacked appropriate assessment and services to families in sexual abuse cases that resulted in the child's placement or family involvement with the agency.

It was noted in interviews with stakeholders that it is often difficult to obtain specialized mental health services, placements in residential treatment programs.

Key Findings for Systemic Factors

Each of the seven Systemic Factors was rated on a scale from “1” to “4” on the basis of review information on State performance on multiple State plan and program requirements associated with the particular Systemic Factor. If all the requirements for a Systemic Factor were met, the Systemic Factor was rated a “4.” If all except one requirement was met, the Systemic Factor was rated a “3.” A rating of “3” or “4” resulted in a determination that the State was in substantial conformity on that factor.

If some of the requirements for a Systemic Factor were in place but more than one (except the information system Systemic Factor) was rated as an area needing improvement, the Systemic Factor was rated a “2” and resulted in a determination that the State was not in substantial conformity on that factor. Except in the information system Systemic Factor, if one area was rated as an area needing improvement, the Systemic Factor would be rated a “1” and would result in a determination that the State was not in substantial conformity on that factor.

1. Statewide Information System

This Systemic Factor was rated “4” and is in substantial conformity.

Arizona has a sophisticated data system (CHILDS) that can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of children in foster care. The system is able to provide useful case information to case managers for supervising case work and program evaluation. Aggregated data can be generated all across the State and is helpful to managers and supervisors for program evaluation and is used for Outcome-based reports.

2. Case Review System

This Systemic Factor was rated “3” and is in substantial conformity.

In some instances, mostly in-home cases, families were not actively involved in the case-planning process. More consistency is needed in involving both the child and families in case planning, especially children that are old enough to be involved in the case plan development. More consistency is also needed in addressing educational and health needs of the child in the case plan. Stakeholders were concerned that the State’s high vacancy rate and staff turnover are affecting the quality of the case plan and consistency in involving both the children and families in the case planning.

The Model Court (one judge/one family throughout the legal process) has played a significant role in facilitating initial case plan development with a focus on visitation, services and placements due to the continuity it provides.

Both the 6-month periodic reviews and the 12-month permanency hearings are held timely and are substantive. Internal and external stakeholder interviews indicated that the judges, attorneys and workers are all well aware of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeframes for permanency hearings. This has a positive effect on mobilizing services to move children to permanency.

Both Foster Care Review Board (FCRB) 6-month reviews and permanency hearings are inclusive, especially in the FCRB hearings. However, the opportunity for foster parents to be heard and participate in a court hearing is inconsistent and courts may rely on the CASA or GAL to speak for the foster parents even when the foster parents were present.

The case review indicates tribes (particularly the Navajo Nation) receive timely notice of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) for children in care.

3. Quality Assurance System

This Systemic Factor was rated "2" and is not in substantial conformity.

The Department of Economic Security (DES) has numerous quality assurance systems in place to monitor case work, the quality of services and outcomes. However, there is no formal Statewide quality assurance system in place. Stakeholders reported that steps have been taken to implement a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) system Statewide that will formalize the Statewide quality assurance system.

4. Training

This Systemic Factor was rated "2" and is not in substantial conformity.

DES provides initial and ongoing training through a variety of methods and opportunities. Stakeholder interviews reported that the workers are well-trained and that the core training addresses the workers' basic needs to fulfill their job responsibilities. However, it was also stated that workers are not always able to complete core training prior to assuming a caseload due to the high vacancy rate. Therefore, workers are not adequately trained and prepared prior to assuming a full caseload. DES anticipates the recently adopted new worker training (Training Institute – pre-core training) will enable workers to complete their training prior to assuming a full caseload.

Presently, there is no system in place to ensure the consistency and quality of foster parent training. Foster parent training is provided through contractors, and the training is tailored to the community. Most foster parents felt their training met their needs. Foster parents did note a need to provide more specialized training, such as caring for older children and children with emotional and/or behavioral issues. DES needs to develop and implement a quality assurance system for foster parent training.

5. Service Array

This Systemic Factor was rated "3" and is in substantial conformity.

A wide array of services is available to children and families in Arizona, especially in urban areas. There are a number of initiatives and pilot projects, such as 300 Kids Project, to coordinate services and individualize an approach to achieve permanency for hard-to-place children.

However, in the stakeholder interviews and case record review, it was noted that when a child moves from one community to another, maintaining the services and continuity of care was an area needing improvement. Also, Title XIX mental health services, residential treatment programs, and adequate placement programs were noted numerous times by stakeholders as a need, particularly in rural areas.

6. Agency Responsiveness to the Community

This Systemic Factor was rated "4" and is in substantial conformity.

Stakeholders indicated DES is responsive, and there is a broad and inclusive process to seek input and share information with community partners. Stakeholders cited numerous examples of positive ongoing collaboration and coordination efforts, both at the systemic and the case levels.

7. Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment and Retention

This Systemic Factor was rated "3" and is in substantial conformity.

DES has comprehensive licensing standards for foster and adoptive homes and child care institutions that reflect national standards. Court approved kinship foster homes and certified adoptive homes facilitate relative placements. DES obtains criminal background checks as required by Federal law.

DES has three levels of recruitment and utilizes various strategies to recruit ethnically and racially diverse homes. Despite the improvements, the foster and adoptive homes available in the State are not equivalent to the ethnic and racial diversity of children in out-of-home placements. DES needs to continue to improve recruitment efforts, especially for African American, Hispanic and Native American foster and adoptive parents.

Recruitment of homes for older children and children with emotional and/or behavioral needs was also identified by stakeholders as an area needing improvement.